

Suckers in a whirlpool?

By DAVID GRIFFITHS, a former university student who has been through many Orientation Weeks

Student leaders are sharply critical of "Orientation Week."

Because it's a failure — not due to what it is, but rather what it fails to be.

The real problem of orientation is never dealt with—the transition from secondary school to tertiary education.

Many students will fail at university this year because of their inability to adjust or orientate.

Orientation Week does serve as a useful way of becoming acquainted with the physical surrounding and of making or reaffirming friendships.

But it has certain features, such as student rags and competitions which the naive student should be aware of.

Two student leaders I spoke to were very critical of these aspects.

The president of the National Union of Australian University Students, Mr John Bannon, 24, says freshers and freshettes face two major problems in entering a university:

- Adapting to the transition from secondary school.

- Getting full value from university life.

John says that students must be wary "that accumulated club junk is not pushed on to them as a myriad of clubs and societies compete for their membership."

"This mainly consists of last year's magazines, which no one would buy and should not want to buy."

THE LOT

John also warns students of the "usual inveigling" by the clubs and societies.

"Go along to everything, try the lot and wait for a while before settling into some specialised interest."

"They should make the most of it," he says "afterwards they will be pushed back into obscurity by the older hands."

The chairman of the Clubs and Societies Council at Monash University says orientation "is an



attempt to force university life into an unreal situation."

He says it is unreal because:

- People go out of their way to help freshers and freshettes and "a week later don't care."

- There was "little of the offensive humdrum of the usual non-academic bigotry."

- The lectures given to students were by "nice friendly types," free of the usual academic pressure.

- Only five to ten per cent of the second-year and above students would be there.

"Freshers and freshettes feel like suckers in a whirlpool of bureaucracy and the ideas of other people on what they ought to be doing," he said.

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